

Patrick Boughan <patrick.boughan@gmail.com>

Sep 10, 2021, 6:06
PM

to Susan, Mayor, Rebecca, Laura, dlevi, eserafy-cox, Kaia, lonniekaufman, scondon, rgold, John, me

Dear Members of the School Committee, Mayor, and Superintendent:

I'm confused by this recent announcement given the letters sent to families in August regarding the 4 phases of COVID protocols. It seemed that the Superintendent's health committee made the District Physician and the City Health Department had taken over Health & Safety decisions for the District. I thought this was because many people, including School Committee members, felt unqualified to be making medical decisions for the District and wished that this decision be handled by the health professionals of the City. I have a few questions:

- Was last night's School Committee vote at the behest of the previously mentioned health committee? If not, has the School Committee's now re-inserted themselves into health decisions as unqualified armchair epidemiologists?
- Which one of the four phases that were previously outlined to parents in August are we now in to require outdoor masking at recess? How was the change to require masks during the previously large mask break of recess weighed against how it will affect student indoor mask compliance?
- Why is more distance required outdoors at recess than indoors? What is the epidemiological evidence for outdoor transmission in children leading to severe outcomes that the School Committee's decision is based on? How was the risk weighed against the benefits to child development of free play during an 18+ month period with end of offramps in sight? Given that recess only involves our youngest children, the evidence should be for kids under 12.
- If the community wants to be involved in how the health and safety of public schools is run should they contact the School Committee, the Superintendent, the Board of Health, of the City Health Department? Which issue should be addressed to which of these public bodies? Which issues are each of these various bodies responsible now? Where is that stated transparently?
- This communication today mentions that antigen tests are being used for symptomatic cases. Does this mean that the previously suspended antigen-based "test and stay" program is back in place? If so, please state that clearly in your communications. If not, explain why antigen is sufficient for symptomatic testing but not for close contact?

Patrick Boughan
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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Harrity, Tracy** <aspen-sysadmin@myfollett.com>

Date: Fri, Sep 10, 2021 at 4:39 PM

Subject: Health & Safety Update from Superintendent Provost in English & Spanish.
9.10.21

To: <tharrity@northampton-k12.us>

September 10, 2021

Dear NPS Community:

Last night, the Northampton School Committee amended the district's Face Covering Policy. Under the revised policy, "if it is possible to enforce physical distancing during recess, masks may be optional. However, if students are within 6 feet of each other while playing, even for short times, masks must be worn." Our experience during the first weeks of school has shown that it is not practical to enforce 6-foot physical distancing while students are at recess. **Given the change to the policy, the Northampton Public Schools will require students to wear face coverings at recess beginning on September 13th.** The policy update also clarifies that the only acceptable masks are snugly fitting disposable surgical masks or cloth masks with two or more layers of tightly woven fabric.

Students will still be provided with mask breaks and be able to unmask during outdoor classes where teachers can provide physical distancing. At the same meeting, the School Committee also mandated that all district staff be vaccinated against COVID-19 by October 22nd, with appropriate accommodations for staff with medical conditions or sincerely held religious beliefs, observances or practices. **Let us take the opportunity to once again encourage eligible students to be vaccinated.** We have already experienced three COVID-related events in the schools this year. Vaccinated individuals have been able to return to school on an expedited basis. In addition to providing highly-effective protection against infection and serious illness, receiving the vaccine will minimize the interruptions to learning for students who have been exposed to the virus.

We would also take the opportunity to encourage participation in our COVID testing program. We are working with our testing vendor to set up schedules for those who have provided consent. If you have not already provided consent via the hard copy forms sent home at the beginning of the year, you will have another opportunity to provide consent electronically via a link that will be posted on our district website next week. We will begin routine covid safety check testing (formally called pooled testing) by the end of the month. Our district will also be providing symptomatic testing with the Abbott BinaxNOW antigen test. Further information will be provided to caregivers and staff closer to the implementation of the program.

We hope that future developments will bring new information that allows us to relax our health and safety practices, but our first priority is to do whatever it takes to keep our students and staff safe and to keep our schools open. We also know that our students have responded with grace and resilience to all that has been asked of them over the past 18 months. That gives us confidence that you will step up once again and do what needs to be done to keep our community safe.

Sincerely,

John A. Provost, Ed.

Superintendent of Schools

Lisa Safron, BSN, RN, NCSN

Director of Health, Safety & Equity Programs

10 de septiembre de 2021

Estimada Comunidad de NPS:

Anoche el Comité Escolar de Northampton enmendó la Política de Uso de Cubiertas de Rostros del distrito. Según la política revisada, "si es posible imponer el distanciamiento físico durante el recreo, las máscaras pueden ser opcionales. No obstante, si los estudiantes están a menos de 6 pies de distancia entre sí mientras juegan, incluso por períodos cortos, se deben usar las máscaras". Nuestra experiencia durante las primeras semanas de clases ha demostrado que no es práctico imponer una distancia física de 6 pies mientras los estudiantes están en el recreo. **Dado el cambio en la política, las Escuelas Públicas de Northampton requerirán que los estudiantes se cubran la cara en el recreo a partir del 13 de septiembre.** La actualización de la política también aclara que las únicas máscaras aceptables son las máscaras quirúrgicas desechables que se ajusten cómodamente o las máscaras de tela que tengan dos o más capas de tela de tejido apretado.

Los estudiantes aún recibirán descansos en el uso de las máscaras y podrán quitárselas durante las clases al aire libre donde los maestros pueden proporcionar distanciamiento físico. En la misma reunión, el Comité Escolar también ordenó que todo el personal del distrito se vacune contra el COVID-19 antes del 22 de octubre, con las adaptaciones adecuadas para el personal con afecciones médicas o creencias, prácticas o prácticas religiosas estrictamente sostenidas. **Aprovechamos la oportunidad para animar una vez más a los estudiantes elegibles a vacunarse.** Ya hemos experimentado tres eventos relacionados con el COVID en las escuelas este año. Los que estaban vacunados pudieron regresar a la escuela rápidamente. Además de brindar una protección altamente efectiva contra infecciones y enfermedades graves, recibir la vacuna reducirá al mínimo las interrupciones en el aprendizaje de los estudiantes que han estado expuestos al virus.

También aprovechamos la oportunidad para alentar a la participación en nuestro programa de pruebas de COVID. Estamos trabajando con nuestro proveedor de pruebas para establecer horarios para aquellos que ya dieron su consentimiento. Si usted aún no ha dado su consentimiento a través de los formularios impresos que se enviaron a la casa a principios del año, tendrá otra oportunidad para dar su consentimiento electrónicamente a través de un enlace que se publicará en el sitio web de nuestro distrito la próxima semana. Comenzaremos las pruebas de verificación de seguridad de COVID de rutina (formalmente llamadas las pruebas agrupadas) a finales de mes. Nuestro distrito también proporcionará pruebas sintomáticas con la prueba de antígeno Abbott BinaxNOW. Se proporcionará más información a los cuidadores y al personal cuando estemos más cerca de la implementación del programa.

Esperamos que los desarrollos futuros traigan nueva información que nos permita relajar nuestras prácticas de salud y seguridad, pero nuestra prioridad es hacer lo que sea necesario para mantener seguros a nuestros estudiantes y al personal, y mantener nuestras escuelas abiertas. También sabemos que nuestros estudiantes han respondido con gracia y resistencia a

todo lo que se les ha pedido durante los últimos 18 meses, lo que nos da la confianza de que ustedes darán un paso adelante una vez más y harán lo que sea necesario para mantener segura a nuestra comunidad.

Atentamente,

John A. Provost, Ed.
Superintendente de Escuelas

Lisa Safron, BSN, RN, NCSN
Directora de Programas de Salud,
Seguridad y Equidad

Have a wonderful day!

Kind regards,

Tracy Harrity
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